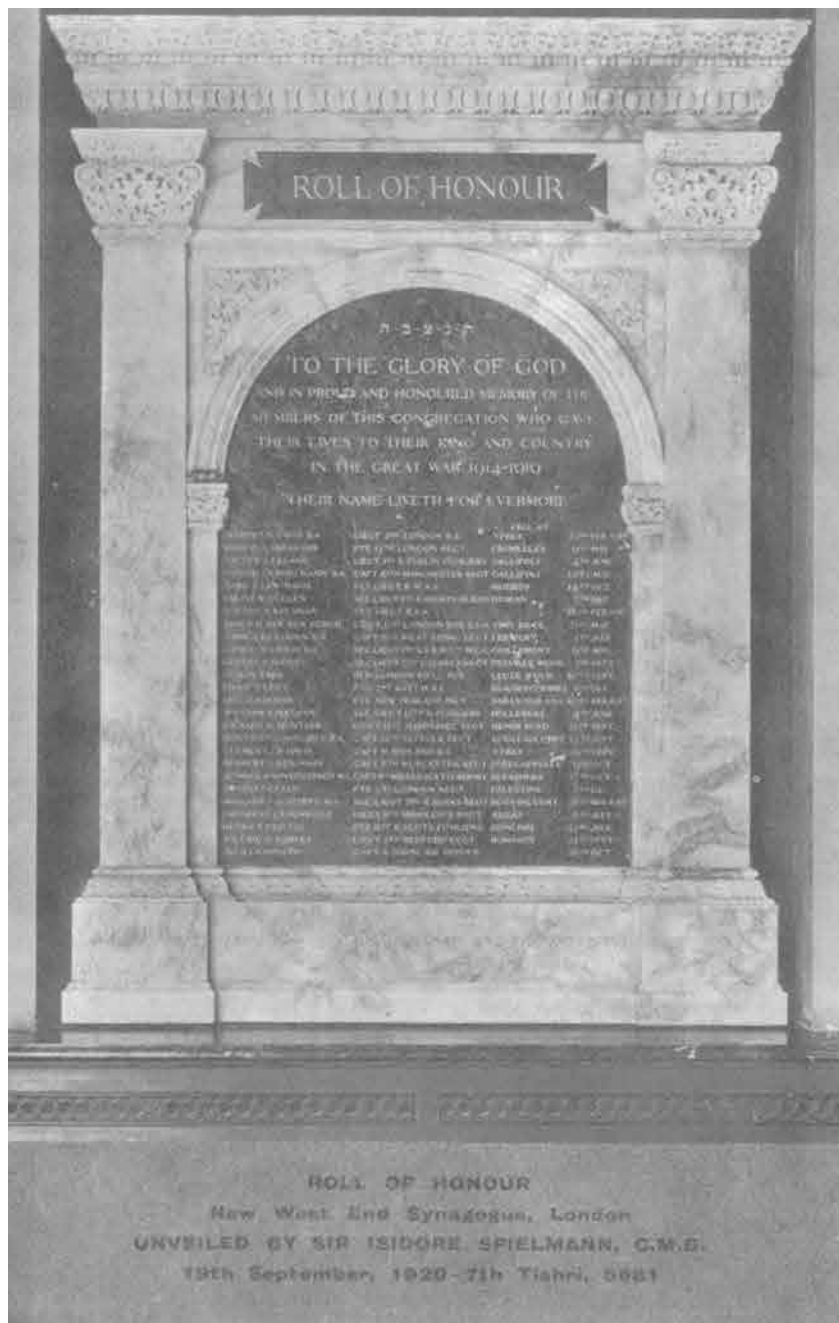




100 Years Ago...

Remembering World War One





A memorial to fallen soldiers at The New West End Synagogue. Similar memorials are at a number of other US communities and cemeteries.

100 Years Ago...

Remembering World War One

*This booklet is dedicated to the memory
of those who fell in World War One.*

100 Years Ago...

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

100 years ago, Europe stood on the cusp of a conflict of such frightening ferocity, that it would change the course of history. Much of the political landscape of our society is, to a large extent, a result of the Great War of 1914-1918, as World War One came to be known. The war began on 4 August 1914, which, as it does this year, coincided with Tisha B'Av. The Jewish world was also profoundly affected by the war, as articles in this booklet so movingly and poignantly describe.

I commend the United Synagogue Living & Learning department, which, as part of its work provides educational materials for US communities and beyond, for producing this booklet. I hope it will provide readers with valuable insights into World War One and inspire us all to ennoble our lives today.

Reading through this excellent booklet makes one shudder. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the valiant soldiers whose bravery paved the way for our free and peaceful society today. We owe much to those who, with remarkable tenacity, rebuilt families, communities and entire societies in the wake of the devastation.

The Great War became known as “the war to end all wars,” such was its ferocity. If only that would have been true. Barely 20 years later the world would be drawn into a conflict of even greater intensity, sacrifice and suffering.

On the plaza of the United Nations in New York, an organisation whose roots lie in the aftermath of the failed League of Nations following World War One, a ‘Peace Wall’ was established. In a world reeling once again from conflict, that wall displayed the famous words of the First Temple prophet Isaiah (2:4), who lived through some desperate conflicts in his time.

And He [God] shall judge between the nations, and shall provide justification for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; no nation shall lift up a sword against another, neither shall they learn war any more.

¹ וְשָׁפֵט בֵּין הַגּוֹיִם, וְהוֹכִיחַ לְעַמִּים
רְבִים; וְכָתְנוּ חֶרְבוֹתָם לְאַתִּים, וְחָרְ
נִיתוֹתֵיהֶם לְמִזְמְרוֹת--לֹא-יִשָּׂא גּוֹי
אֶל-גּוֹי חֶרֶב, וְלֹא-יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְ-
חָמָּה.

Isaiah expressed our continuous yearning for peace, which is reflected in our daily prayers and aspirations. The prophet's words resonate deeply with us as we contemplate the lessons of World War One and strive to build a world in which war is a phenomenon of the past and weapons are only used for the study of history. May his words be fulfilled speedily in our times.



Introduction

World War One had a profound effect on humanity which still resounds in our current states system, the structure of International Organisations and in the family histories of many people.

Part of this effect was the changed landscape of Jewish communities. Here are just a few examples to emphasise the point. Jewish communities around Europe in particular were at the epicentre of some of the fiercest fighting, especially on the Eastern Front, where many communities were displaced. Jew fought against Jew across the different fighting fronts. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, declaring British support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, emerged in the midst of the great conflict of World War One.

This year, our country marks the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War. The Jewish community must contribute its perspectives as well.

As such, we have been fortunate to be able to compile this booklet which we hope will provide insights into the Great War and ways in which the United Synagogue was engaged by it as well as making readers think about the way our world is today. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our ancestors for having somehow rebuilt their societies after both World Wars.

Since the Great War broke out on Tisha B'Av, we have included information about that unfortunate day in the Jewish calendar. We have also provided a memorial prayer for service personnel who have fallen in action as well as a prayer for the safety of Servicemen and Women in the Armed Forces today, both of which can be used on appropriate occasions.

Whilst reflecting on the terrible devastation caused by World War One, we think of the words in Tehillim (Psalms) 47:10 which are part of the group of psalms attributed to the 'B'nei Korach' and are in anticipation of the Messianic age of peace:

He [God] makes wars stop to the end of earth. He will break the bow and snap the spear. He will burn chariots in fire.

מִשְׁבִּית מִלְחָמוֹת, עַד-קִצָּה הָאָרֶץ, קִשֶּׁת
יִשְׁבֵּר, וְקִצֵּץ חֲנִית; עֲגָלוֹת, יִשְׂרֹף בָּאֵשׁ.¹

May that time of global peace foreseen by our verse, when God's sovereignty is recognised by all, come speedily in our days.

Rabbi Andrew Shaw, Rabbi Michael Laitner and Joanna Rose

US Living and Learning, London, Sivan 5774 / June 2014

¹ www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt1002.htm

A black and white photograph showing several World War I soldiers in a trench. The soldiers are wearing helmets and carrying rifles. One soldier in the foreground is looking down, while others are positioned further back in the trench. The ground is uneven and appears to be covered in mud or debris.

World War One:

a selected timeline of
events from the outbreak
of war in 1914 to the
conclusion of peace
negotiations in 1919

World War One Timeline

1914

June 28: Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, are assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia.

July 28: Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.

August 3: Germany declares war on France. Great Britain gives the order for troops to mobilise.

August 4: Germany declares war on Belgium. The USA declares neutrality.

Great Britain gives Austria-Hungary an ultimatum to stand down from hostilities. When Austria-Hungary does not comply, a state of war is declared at 11.00pm

August 11: 'Your King and Country Need You' slogan is published, calling for the first 100,000 men to enlist for Lord Kitchener's New Army. The call is answered within two weeks.

September 6: The first Battle of Marne checks the German advance at the cost of 13,000 British, 250,000 French and 250,000 German casualties.

October 29: Turkey enters the war.

November 22: Trenches are established along the entire Western Front.

1915

May 7: German U-boat torpedoes the British liner Lusitania with the loss of American lives, creating a US-German diplomatic crisis.

May 31: The first Zeppelin raid on London kills seven and injures 35. British morale is shaken as Germany demonstrates it can attack the capital at will.

June 30: German troops use flame throwers for the first time against the British.

October 31: Steel helmets introduced on the British Front.

1916

January 24: Introducing conscription, the British Government passes the Military Service Act.

February 21: The Battle of Verdun starts with a German offensive against the Mort-Homme Ridge. The battle lasts 10 months and over a million men become casualties.

May 31 - June 1: The Battle of Jutland. The German High Seas Fleet is forced to retire despite inflicting heavier losses on the Royal Navy (14 ships and 6,100 men), but the German fleet remains irreparably damaged for the rest of the war.

June 8: Voluntary Enlistment in Britain is replaced by Compulsion.

July 1: The Battle of the Somme sees 750,000 Allied soldiers unleashed along a 25 mile front. By the end of the day nearly 60,000 are dead, wounded or missing for very little gain. It is the worst single day's fighting in British military history.

September 15: The Battle of Flers-Courcelette signifies the start of the third stage of the Somme Offensive. Tanks are used for the first time.

December 18: The Battle of Verdun ends. It is the longest and costliest battle on the Western Front.

1917

January 31: Germany announces the continuation of unrestricted submarine warfare, hoping to starve Britain into submission.

March 15: Tsar Nicholas II abdicates as Moscow falls to Russian Revolutionaries. The demise of the Russian Army frees German troops for the Western Front.

April 6: The USA declares war on Germany. Troops begin to mobilise immediately.

April 19: The Second Battle of Gaza begins in Palestine.

June 7: The Battle of Messines Ridge. The British take the ridge with few casualties, as it is preceded by the detonation of 19 mines under the German front lines. The explosions are reportedly heard in England.



Since the days of Oliver Cromwell

GREAT BRITAIN

has meted out the fairest treatment politically, socially and in every way to Jews.

Now is the time for Jews to reciprocate and show

THE OLD SPIRIT OF THE MACCABEES IS NOT DEAD

Every Able Bodied Unmarried Jew

Between 19 and 45 should

JOIN THE BRITISH ARMY.

Join as Jews and be Proud of Your Race.

GOD SAVE THE KING.



פון אליווער קראמוועלס צייטען און האט

גרויס בריטאניא

בעהאנדעלט דא אידען אויפ'ן פיינסטען ארט. פאליטיש, עקאנאמיש און אין
עדער הניזיכט בכלל.

איצט איז די צייט פאר אידען צוריקצאהלען און ציינען אז דער

אלטער גייסט פון די מאקאבי'ער איז נישט אבגעשטארבען.

יעדער קערפערליך פעהיג אונפעררהייראטער איד

צווישען 19 און 45 יאר וואל זיך

אנשליסען אין דער ענגלישער ארמע.

שליסט אייך אן אלס אידען און זייט שטארק אויף אייער ראסע.

נאט שיין דעם קיניג.

The following is a list of a few Recruiting Offices in London:—

Barking.—The Clerk House, Barking R.
Barking.—Town Hall, Barking Road, E.
City.—Barbican, City Road.
City.—1, London Wall Buildings.
City.—St. St. Paul's Churchyard.

Deptford.—Town Hall, Deptford, S.E.
East Ham.—Town Hall, East Ham, E.
Hackney.—20, Moss Street, Hackney.
Hammersmith.—Hammersmith, City's Jan.
Road, W.C.

Islington.—Central Library, Holloway
Road, N.
Islington.—Public Library, Manor
—Globe, N. (near to Holloway Empire).
Poplar.—Conservative Club, Poplar, E.

Poplar.—Town Hall, High Street.
Shoreditch.—Town Hall, Shoreditch, E.
St. Pancras.—Working Men's College,
Crownfield Road.
Walthamstow.—Town Hall, E.

August 23: The formation of the Jewish Legion is announced.

October 31: Battle of Beersheba, Palestine. British forces take the town capturing 1,800 Turkish troops. This leaves the way open for the advance on Jerusalem.

November 2: British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour issues the 'Balfour Declaration' supporting Jewish national aspirations in Palestine.

November 7: British capture Gaza.

November 10: The Battle of Passchendaele ends. After months of fighting, the Allies have advanced only 5 miles. Half a million men were casualties, of which around 140,000 were killed.

December 11: Britain liberates Jerusalem, ending 673 years of Turkish rule.

1918

March 3: Soviet Russia concludes a separate peace at Brest-Litovsk with Germany and her allies.

March 23: German assaults now reach the Somme Line. The greatest air battle of the war takes place over the battlefield as 70 aircraft are involved in a single combat.

October 30: The Turkish army surrenders to the British in Mesopotamia.

November 3: At Kiel, German sailors mutiny. Austria-Hungary signs an armistice with the Allies.

November 8: Armistice negotiations between the Allies and Germany begin.

November 9: Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany abdicates and flees to Holland. Revolution in Berlin breaks out.

November 11: Armistice Day. The Armistice is signed at 5.00am and comes into effect at 11.00am. At 10.57am, Canadian Private George Lawrence Price is killed while on patrol in Canal du Centre. He is the last soldier to die in action on the Western Front. **The Treaty of Versailles, formally ending the War, was signed on 28 June 1919.**

The First World War Centenary: The Jewish Contribution.

Rabbi (Major) Reuben
Livingstone LLM CF, Jewish
Chaplain to HM Forces,
Honorary Chaplain to AJEX

The centenary commemoration of World War One marks not only an important milestone in modern history but also the tumultuous beginning of a century that would change the face of Europe and the world. From a Jewish perspective, the Great War - the so called 'war to end all wars' – as World War One came to be known, would also sow the seeds of the Holocaust and of the utter upheaval of Jewish life on the Continent. But there is another parallel and more optimistic British Jewish story - that of proud service and sacrifice for King and country; and of exemplary commitment and citizenship.

The number of identified Jews who served during World War One based on British military records was around 50,000. But then, as now, it was not entirely uncommon to be reticent in declaring one's Jewish identity. Many Jews also changed their names for fear of anti-Semitism in the ranks. These factors mean that the actual number was likely higher.

Five Jewish soldiers won the Victoria Cross awarded for valour "in the face of the enemy". The VC takes precedence over all other orders, decorations and medals and is extremely rare. The extraordinary courage shown by Sergeant Issy Smith (Shmulevitch), Captain Robert Gee, Lieutenant Frank Alexander de Pass, Private Jack White (Weiss), and Lance Corporal Leonard Maurice Keysor still resonates in the annals of British Army history. No less than fifty Jewish soldiers received the Distinguished Service Order.

In addition, Jews formed their own unit, the Zion Mule Corps, fighting at Gallipoli and the Dardanelles in 1915. The Zion Mule Corps and the Jewish Battalion went on to fight with distinction in Palestine. In 1918, three Jewish units, the 38th, 39th and 40th battalions of the Royal Fusiliers were part of the Jewish Legion under General Sir Edmund Allenby in Palestine. These unique regiments were disbanded after the First World War.

Many Eastern European Jews served in the Pioneer Corps, working as labourers on the infamous trenches. The number of such foreign Jews in the Labour Corps is estimated at over 4,600, including those who served in the Middlesex Alien Companies and the Egyptian Labour Corps.

The Jewish history of military service

Jews, in fact, have a very long and distinguished tradition of military service that goes back to the Torah itself and continues prominently in the State of Israel. But even our history in the British Forces goes back over three

hundred years. A common European anti-Semitic fabrication was to accuse Jews of being unwilling to join the military - but the facts tell a different story. During World War One, a census instituted by the German Military High Command known as *Judenzahlung* (literally 'Jew-count') was carried out to substantiate claims that Jews were under-represented in the German Military and thus unpatriotic. Though suppressed and never publicised, the results roundly disproved the claims. The Jewish authorities who had conducted a parallel census and found the statistics of Jewish involvement to be very high, were denied access to the official archives. (Remarkably, thousands of men of Jewish descent and hundreds of what the Nazis called 'full Jews' served in the German military with Hitler's knowledge and approval. Cambridge University researcher Bryan Rigg has traced the Jewish ancestry of more than 1,200 of Hitler's soldiers, including two field marshals and fifteen generals [two full generals, eight lieutenant generals, five major generals - "men commanding up to 100,000 troops"]. In approximately 20 cases, Jewish soldiers in the Nazi army were awarded Germany's highest military honour, the Knight's Cross).

Professor Derek Penslar of St Anne's College, Oxford / University of Toronto, has done extensive research into Jewish military service in the 19th century. He notes that, based on archives, it can be seen that in France, Austro-Hungary, Italy and several other countries during the Victorian era, between 4-18% of military officers were Jewish; hugely more than the proportion of Jews in the wider populations. In Russia, under different conditions, the same situation prevailed. This was partly because a military career offered Jews greater equality of opportunity - especially in technical areas such as engineering, artillery, and logistics - where they excelled. It also gave them the means to shine as men and put to rights the noxious stereotype of the passive Jew.

In the late 19th century the famous Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan of Radin, known as the *Chafetz Chaim*, wrote an halachic guidebook for Cantonist Jewish soldiers called *Machane Yisrael*. It is highly significant that, despite offering special leniencies for these serving personnel, nowhere in the work does he say that Jews should not serve or that fighting is prohibited. On the contrary, the author reaches out to these men and attempts to recognise their importance and integrate them into the traditional Jewish world.

Later, during World War Two, out of a Jewish population in Britain estimated at only 400,000, approximately 60,000 Jewish men and women served in all three services of the British Armed Forces. As in World War One, British Jews bore more than their full share of the War effort in operations around



the globe - on sea, land, and in the air. They continued to do so in later conflicts including Malaya, Kenya, Korea, Northern Ireland, the Falklands, Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the same way, American Jews served in disproportion to their numbers: nearly 250,000 in World War One and well over 400,000 in World War Two. The very same phenomenon was true in the Soviet Red Army.

Remarkably, nearly 200,000 Polish Jews fought against Nazi Germany in the ranks of the Polish Armies - on Polish soil and in exile. Despite this tremendous contribution to the war effort, the official Polish historical bibliography of World War One shamefully ignores this contribution [particularly as there were nearly 5,000 Jewish officers].

Jewish Military Chaplaincy

Jewish military chaplaincy in the British Armed Forces under the authority of the Chief Rabbi, has been the sustaining spiritual force behind distinguished Jewish service for nearly 120 years. Its unique history was very much

forged out of the experience of the World War One when Jewish Chaplains first formed part of the British Army on active service. Jews were officially recognised in the British Armed Forces as a distinct religious body from 1889. The Visitation Committee of the United Synagogue had been responsible for the religious and spiritual welfare of Jews in public institutions. It decided to extend the scope of its activities to serving members of the Forces and applied to the War Office for the formal appointment of a Jewish Chaplain. This request was granted in 1892 and the Rev. Francis L. Cohen, Minister of the Borough Synagogue in London, was appointed as the first Jewish Chaplain to H.M. Forces.

In 1897, Rev. Cohen obtained the sanction of the British Admiralty and the War Office for a special annual service for Jewish men in the Forces. Every year the event was attended by important representatives of the Fighting Services, including the Chaplain General and senior members of the Army Chaplains Department. The Honorary Officers of the United Synagogue also attended. In those days the order for this parade was “Dress as for Church Parade,” i.e. Helmet and Side-Arms. Every Unit turned out in “Full Dress” filling the Synagogue with varied coloured uniforms of all types, with all kinds of head-dress including bearskins, busbies, shakos, and helmets. The officers were accommodated in front of the Ark, and the rank and file in the main ground floor of the building. The public, which included friends and family of those present, occupied the gallery. For all civilians admission was by ticket only. The whole parade would form up under the supervision of a prominent senior officer and, headed by a Regimental Band, would march ceremoniously into shul. Personnel included representatives of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army, Militia, Army Cadets, Volunteers, Yeomanry, British Red Cross and St. John Ambulance Detachments; as well as veterans of all the campaigns in India, Egypt, Africa and Canada. This august event was the precursor to what has become the annual AJEX Parade at the Cenotaph.

Rev. Michael Adler and World War One military chaplaincy

When Rev. Cohen was called to become Chief Rabbi of Sydney, Australia in 1904, he was succeeded by a remarkable man – Rev. Michael Adler, who served as the Minister of the Central Synagogue in Great Portland Street at the outbreak of the War. Previously, he had served the now defunct Hammersmith Synagogue. Both were amongst the earliest United Synagogue communities.

A map appears on this page in the printed version of this booklet, but is not displayed in this version for copyright reasons.

After the War, Rev. Arthur Barnett, Chaplain to the Forces (CF), wrote of Rev. Adler:



At the outbreak of the First World War he was the only Jewish Chaplain to have held His Majesty's Commission in the Army. He was faced now with the tremendous task of organising an adequate Jewish Chaplaincy for work in the field as well as at home. The peculiar problems of the Jewish Serviceman scattered in almost every army unit were well-nigh insurmountable. In addition, the War Office was at a loss to know what to do with a Jewish Chaplain in the field and refused to allow Adler to go overseas. It was only his persistence and tenacity which finally overcame the objection, and in January 1915, for the first time in the history of the British

Army, a Jewish Chaplain was ministering to Jewish troops in the field... It is not possible here to continue the story of how he built up the Jewish Chaplaincy during the war. Suffice it to say that it was a creatio ex nihilo. With no precedent to guide him, with nothing but his own forcefulness of purpose and growing experience, he organised the department with such efficiency that before the war was over he had received promotion in rank, a twofold mention-in-dispatches and the signal honour of the D.S.O. He was indefatigable in his energies, infectious in his enthusiasm, dynamic in his influence on his colleagues, and impressive in his devotion to the Jewish soldier's well-being. Many thousands of Jews will remember him with gratitude and honour. During those tragic years he made Jewish history...

Eventually, there were 17 uniformed Jewish Chaplains who served in the Army Chaplains' department between 1914 and 1918 in all theatres of war. By the Second World War, there were at least 38 - including Lieutenant-Colonel Israel Brodie who would later become Chief Rabbi in 1948.

One hundred years on, we are all connected to World War One, either through our own family history, the heritage of our local communities - or

because of its long-term impact on society and the world we live in today. From 2014 to 2018, across the world, nations, communities and individuals of all ages will come together to mark, commemorate and remember the lives of those who lived, fought, and died in the Great War. The Jewish community will play its full part in the proud knowledge that it made a significant contribution. That selfless commitment continues unto this very day through those numbers of Jews, current members of The Armed Forces Jewish Community, that serve with devotion and sacrifice in Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

To find out more about Rev. Adler's remarkable activities, read his chapter in the British Jewry Book of Honour, available for download from www.theus.org.uk/100yearsago.

A survey of the work of the Chief Rabbi and the United Synagogue during World War One

Rabbi Michael Laitner, Education Director of US Living & Learning; assistant Rabbi, Finchley Synagogue

The British Jewish community was deeply affected by World War One. As patriotic citizens, many Jews – although not all - signed up amongst the surge of volunteers to join the armed forces in 1914, as Rebecca Filer has outlined from the perspective of JFS elsewhere in this booklet for example. Too many of them lost their lives.

In this article, we will very briefly survey some of the work which the Chief Rabbi, the United Synagogue rabbinate, United Synagogue communities and the United Synagogue as an organisation did as the challenges of World War One mounted. This augmented the work of the London Beth Din and of Rev. Michael Adler which David Frei and Rabbi (Major) Reuben Livingstone have outlined respectively elsewhere in this booklet.

The then Chief Rabbi, Dr Joseph Hertz, whose edition of the Chumash (Pentateuch) is still widely used, was installed as Chief Rabbi in 1913. The outbreak of war meant that he unexpectedly had to redefine elements of his role from his initial focus on education which was a theme of his installation address. Suddenly, he, his ministers and lay leaders had to provide religious inspiration and leadership for the broad British Jewish community in a war whose modern weaponry and technology allowed the conflict to be prosecuted with a frightening new furiousness in many places around the globe.



ORDER OF SERVICE FOR JEWISH SOLDIERS.

HAMMERSMITH SYNAGOGUE,
BROOK GREEN, W.

SOLDIERS' PRAYER BOOK.

Introductory Prayer		p. 6. <i>Standing.</i>
"Adon Olam"		p. 7.
"Shema"		p. 8.
		<i>(1st paragraph to be read together Standing).</i>
Continue to		p. 11.
Psalms		<i>Verses to be read alternately with the Preacher.</i>
Readings from the Bible		pp. 29, 30.
Prayer for the King and the Royal Family		p. 31.
War Prayer		p. 32.
Address.		
"En Kelohenu"		p. 33.
Concluding Prayer: "Alenu"		pp. 11, 12.
"Kaddish"		p. 13.
"God Save the King"		p. 33.

Religious leadership

Chief Rabbi Hertz faced several challenges as the war developed. Despite the surge of patriotism from some elements of the Jewish community which led to large numbers of Jews volunteering (see the appeal poster reproduced in this booklet from the *Jewish Chronicle* at the time), not all Jews shared these sentiments.



Chief Rabbi Dr Joseph Hertz

In particular, some Russian Jews who had fled from the anti-Semitic and often cruel conditions of Tsarist Russia were ambivalent to say the least about the prospect of fighting alongside Russia, to whom Britain was allied. In 1916, the only recorded anti-Semitic riots during the war took place in Leeds and in Bethnel Green in the East End of London, sparked in part by the presence on the streets of Russian male Jews who were not serving in the military.

The Chief Rabbi was the address for confirming who was a minister of religion for official purposes, as he is today. However, there were then, as today, many rabbis who

worked outside of the Chief Rabbi's aegis. Once conscription came into effect on 2 March 1916, those rabbis needed official certification from the Chief Rabbi as ministers to be able to continue to function as such in their usual capacities. Chief Rabbi Hertz provided this in a way which helped to unify different sectors of the Orthodox community and increase the Chief Rabbinate's capabilities in representing the Jewish community as a whole.

On area of community disagreement during the War was as to whether Cohanim (those of priestly lineage who are proscribed by Jewish law from contact with matters of death other than for a close relative) could volunteer, or follow a conscription order, to take on a combat-related role¹. The Chief

1

Such service may also have had ramifications on whether those Cohanim could

Rabbi permitted Cohanim to serve, triggering a dispute with his Dayanim on the London Beth Din and the rabbinate in Leeds which saw itself as independent of the Chief Rabbi. No exemption was granted for Cohanim by the Armed Forces when conscription was introduced.

Jewish Chaplaincy and other provisions for Jewish soldiers

As Rabbi (Major) Livingstone has written elsewhere in this booklet, Rev. Michael Adler of the Central Synagogue was the Senior Jewish Chaplain to the Forces in World War One, having been granted a leave of absence by his community and the United Synagogue Council to do so on 22 January 1915. The Council also authorised several other ministers to serve as military chaplains.

There was an urgent need for more Jewish military chaplains as the war developed. The majority of these chaplains, be they full-time uniformed chaplains or part-time chaplains who also ministered to their communities, were either United Synagogue ministers or ministers from United Hebrew Congregations in the regions who worked under the authority of the Chief Rabbi. The Chief Rabbi and the United Synagogue Council, along with the United Synagogue War Services Visitation Committee, facilitated elements of the chaplains' work and assisted with finding other temporary ministers for communities who were without religious leadership. By 1917, there were close to 20 such chaplains.

In 1914, the United Synagogue opened an office to help soldiers and their relatives with questions relating to Allowances and Pensions at the Jewish Institute in Mulberry Street in the East End of London. This very busy office, run principally by Rev. A.A. Green and Rev. B. Michaelson, was especially useful for those soldiers and their families who did not have a strong command of English. It provided considerable assistance to thousands of people.

The Chief Rabbi worked together with Rev. Adler to help soldiers maintain as much Jewish life as they could in the awful conditions of war. Rev. Adler produced a special book of prayers which was later enlarged by the Chief Rabbi who similarly edited a number of other works for servicemen (you can see an extract elsewhere in this booklet). Over 110,000 copies were printed and distributed. The Chief Rabbi also published a Book of Jewish Thoughts for servicemen. Both were very well received, including by non-Jewish chaplains, and required reprinting.

¹ 'duchan', perform the priestly blessing.

The Chief Rabbi and Rev. Adler made strenuous efforts to ensure that kosher food was available for Jewish soldiers, especially matzah for Pesach. This did not always prove possible but it is remarkable, in the context of the War and the British Armed Forces at the time, that provision was made at all. As Rabbi (Major) Livingstone has outlined in his article, non-Christian faith chaplaincy was not nearly as advanced then as it is today. Rev. Adler and his fellow chaplains made heroic attempts to provide as much Jewish burial as possible and to arrange services, such as on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur of 1917 when Rev. Adler recorded that hundreds of men were able to attend, to the extent that many could not get into the services conducted by Rev. L. Morris close to the fearsome battle for Passchendaele Ridge. Rev. Adler also advocated for Jewish soldiers to have leave to observe Yom Tov.



Capt. A. Lerner. Rev. M. Adler. Rev. S. Lipson.
JEWISH OFFICERS AND MEN, HAMMERSMITH SYNAGOGUE—IN TRAINING—NOVEMBER 1914.

The Chief Rabbi visited the Western Front in the company of Rev. Adler, in June and July 1915, meeting with soldiers and officers, to provide spiritual and practical support and to emphasise the patriotism of the Jewish soldiers. This visit also heightened awareness of Jewish military chaplaincy. Those Jewish soldiers who had not declared a religion when enlisting were likely to be labelled as 'Church of England'. The work of the Jewish Chaplains and the Chief Rabbi's visit provided an opportunity to reach out to such soldiers.

As a result of his visit, the Chief Rabbi was able to express his pride at how Jewish servicemen were serving their country and how this was appreciated by the Generals that he met, but was also able to tell communities in Britain of the terrible conditions that the soldiers endured at the Western Front.

Patriotism

Patriotism was an important issue for the Chief Rabbi to address. He had to bear in mind the resentment felt towards those who did not serve, whilst acknowledging the genuine patriotism which many British Jews shared with their fellow British citizens. This was a complex issue for the Chief Rabbi who had a responsibility to the whole Jewish community, given his leadership role, whether or not it reflected his views about how the Jewish community should relate to the War.

It was made more sensitive by the fact that despite his support for Britain in the Boer War when he was serving as a rabbi in South Africa, he was an immigrant who had only arrived in the United Kingdom the year before the War started. The Chief Rabbi was careful to refute anti-Semitic canards that Jews did not serve their country, its Empire and its cause loyally. This caution was necessary despite the praise he received about Jewish soldiers, the high proportion of Jews who were awarded military honours, the large numbers proportionally of Jews who served and the fact that an Allied General at the forefront of the decisive strategy to defeat Germany was an Australian Jew, Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash.

Special prayers

The Chief Rabbi issued special prayers for the War effort and the recitation of certain psalms, such as Psalm 121 which is often said at hazardous times, for regular recitation in all communities. These prayers were also incorporated by some communities outside of Orthodoxy. Special 'Intercession' services were also held, being large public prayer gatherings, often addressed by the Chief Rabbi whose sermons at these were reported verbatim in the *Jewish Chronicle*. They also included a special rubric based on the *Tachanun* supplication prayers. One such service took place at the now defunct Great Synagogue in Dukes Place in the City of London, one of the largest United Synagogue buildings, on 4 August 1915. The Great Synagogue was destroyed by German bombing in World War Two.

Intercession services did not always fulfil the Chief Rabbi's aims. The *Jewish Chronicle* of 24 September 1915 reported the Chief Rabbi's disapproval of

an Intercession Service which took place on Yom Kippur of that year at the Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel and included a civic demonstration and political speeches, activities which were not in keeping with Yom Kippur.

The Chief Rabbi also authorised a minor change to the Prayer for the Royal Family, changing 'uphold the peace of the realm' to 'restore the peace of the realm'; for the duration of the War.

Charitable work and Memorials



Memorial at The Hampstead Synagogue for both World Wars.

The President of the United Synagogue at the outbreak of the war was Lord Nathan Mayer Rothschild, who was succeeded by Leopold de Rothschild in 1915. They, their fellow trustees and officers understood that the United Synagogue had to take responsibility in those wartime conditions for charitable work outside of its usual remit. Leopold de Rothschild was at the head of a fund to help Jewish refugees from Belgium who had fled to Britain after the German invasion of Belgium in 1914 (see David Frei's article for more about this).

In August 1915, Leopold de Rothschild wrote to all United Synagogue communities, with a copy of the letter appearing in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 6 August 1915, asking them to entertain service personnel who had been given leave for the upcoming

Rosh Hashanah. The United Synagogue treasurers guaranteed to cover costs of communities who could not afford this.

The United Synagogue Burial Society assisted with war burials, including those which were a *meit mitzvah* (had no other relative or organisation to assist with burial) and also produced rolls of honour to memorialise fallen soldiers, such as those displayed at East Ham, Waltham Abbey and Willesden cemeteries. After the war, the Chief Rabbi and Lionel de Rothschild, who became President of the United Synagogue in 1918, were at the head of the Jewish War Memorial General Council.

Zionism

The 38th Royal Fusiliers was a Jewish Battalion (also known as the Jewish Legion) founded in 1917. Famously, it marched through Jewish heartlands in the East End on 4 February 1918 before travelling to fight in Palestine. The Jewish community provided a kosher lunch for the soldiers, which the Chief Rabbi attended, offering prayers for the soldiers and beseeching God to bless them. The Battalion's colours hung in the Great Synagogue. Along with Russia's withdrawal from the War in 1917 following the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, this battalion also offered an opportunity to conscript Jews who had not wanted to fight alongside Tsarist Russia.



The sight of Jewish soldiers in the British Army fighting to liberate Palestine stirred many Zionist sentiments, albeit with a heavy-heart as those soldiers were marching off to war. The Chief Rabbi and Lord Rothschild were committed Zionists, the latter famously receiving the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917 issued by Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur James Balfour which confirmed the British government's sympathies with Zionist aspirations. The Chief Rabbi wrote to *The Times* in support of Zionism in the prelude to the Balfour Declaration. He remained a committed Zionist despite some of the United Synagogue lay leaders who served during his tenure not sharing his views on this matter.

Conclusions

The terrible, complex conditions of World War One posed many challenges for the Jewish community, especially for Chief Rabbi Hertz as its religious leader and the lay leadership of the United Synagogue as the community's largest religious organisation. Their positions meant they had to find a way to cope with a wide variety of halachic, social, political and communal challenges as well as representing the Jewish community to the government, military and wider society. This was along with their obligation to provide for communal infrastructure and welfare, whilst also doing what they could to assist Jewish servicemen.

We, who are so blessed to live in today's United Kingdom, are standing on the shoulders of all of those who came before us, who fought, worked – and in some cases died - for the society that we are privileged to live in. We owe them all a great debt of gratitude and pray that we never face the challenges that they did.

PRAYER BEFORE A BATTLE.

אָבִיט שְׂבִשְׂמִים . גְּשׁוּה רְצוֹנֶה בְּשָׂמִים מִמֶּלֶךְ .
 וְהוּבִי רְצוֹנֶה לִירְאָה מִמֶּלֶךְ . וְהוּבִי בְּעִצְיוֹ
 גְּשׁוּה . בְּרֹךְ אֱמֶת ה' שׁוֹמֵר תְּפִלָּה :
 בְּרֹךְ אֱמֶת רִחוּי . פְּרִיטָה אֱמֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ :
 שְׂמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ :
 בְּרֹךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכּוֹת לְעוֹלָם נָעַד : אָמֵן :

Unto thee, Heavenly Father, I lift up my heart in this hour of trial and danger. Pardon all my sins and transgressions before thee; and, I beseech thee, extend thy loving care over the lives of those near and dear unto me. Give me the strength to do my duty this day as a true and loyal Israelite in this War for Freedom and Righteousness. Fill me with the faith and courage of those who put their trust in thine everlasting mercy; and lend us through victory unto peace. May thy will be done.

Blessed art thou, O Lord, Who hearest prayer.

Into thy hand I commend my spirit; thou hast reckoned me, O Lord God of truth.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be his name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR MEN ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

GOD of the spirits of all flesh! Thou art our refuge and strength, our very present help in war as in peace. Our lives are in thy hands, and thou art the master of our destinies. O endow us with courage and steadfastness loyally to do our duty as true Israelites to King and Country, and to take our full share in this War for Freedom and Righteousness. O keep us far from what thou hatest; and bring us near to what thou lovest. Shield us from sorrow and hurt, and deal mercifully with us for thy Name's sake, O God, who alone art our Guardian and Deliverer forever. Amen.

The London Beth Din and the initial stages of the First World War

David Frei, Director of External Affairs for the United Synagogue and Registrar of the London Beth Din

In this article, I will briefly focus on several elements of Beth Din work at that time to show some of the broader Jewish infrastructure which the London Beth Din provided then, in addition to its usual work. The Dayanim on the Beth Din at the time were Dayan Moshe Avigdor Chaikin, Dayan Asher Feldman, Dayan Shmuel Yitzchak Hillman, Dayan Harris Lazarus and Dayan Louis Mendelsohn.

Belgian refugees

The Proceedings books of the London Beth Din show that in the first year of the War, the Beth Din was extremely active in ministering to the religious needs of Jewish refugees from Belgium and in assisting them in finding employment.

On 2nd August 1914 the Germans demanded of the Belgian Government that its armies be given free passage through Belgium in order to enable them to outflank the French army which was concentrated in eastern France.

When the neutral Belgians refused such passage, the Germans invaded on 4th August 1914 thereby bringing Britain (which had guaranteed Belgium neutrality by the Treaty of London in 1849) into the War.

The German army committed a number of atrocities against Belgian civilians in August and September 1914 which precipitated a significant refugee

problem with an estimated 1 and a half million Belgians fleeing their homes.

Many of these refugees fled to Britain (estimates range between 160,000 and 250,000) and the Home Front in Britain swung into action to assist these first civilian victims of the war.

Among these refugees were between 6,000 and 8,000 Jews, most of whom were Orthodox and some of whom had migrated to Belgium from Poland and Russia.

Although a national War Refugee Committee was set up to deal with the refugee problem, the Jewish Community took upon itself the task of housing and feeding this influx of Jews from the Continent and large numbers of East End residents replied to charitable appeals by opening up their homes to provide refugees with sleeping accommodation.

The Jews Temporary Shelter in Leman St was used to house many refugees but it could not cope with the throngs arriving daily from Belgium. A large, disused Workhouse of the Westminster Union in Poland Street was made available by the Local Government Board in early Nov 1914 and the Manchester Hotel in Aldersgate Street which had been vacant for nearly a year was also designated by the Local Government Board for the housing of Jewish married couples and families.

Kashrut and other religious services

As early as September and October 1914, the London Beth Din was involved in Kashrut questions arising from the mixing of utensils at the Poland Street shelter and it introduced special supervision measures.

Records show that a Belgian refugee called Siberstein applied for Beth Din permission to open a shop in Black Lion Yard selling borscht. Later that month either he or someone with the same name applied for a Beth Din licence to manufacture sausages.

One refugee from Antwerp applied to the Beth Din in October to open a kosher food store in Brixton and another refugee was found a placement to serve as a Shochet in Ebbw Vale in South Wales.

In November, the Beth Din received an enquiry from the South Wales Community of Llanelli as to whether a refugee could be found to assist in Hebrew teaching in that town. The Beth Din also interviewed and examined a refugee, Mr A. Bergon, who was living in Cable Street as to his fitness to

act as a Shochet and Sofer.

In November, the Beth Din wrote to a Mohel about the newly born son of a refugee who needed Brit Milah.

An interesting complaint was brought to the Beth Din by a Belgian refugee resident in the Manchester Hotel. He alleged that another refugee who had been employed in a Kosher Poultry yard had been seen smoking on Shabbat and had been known to have pawned jewellery in houses of ill repute.

In January 1915 a Belgian refugee appeared before the Beth Din claiming that he had been married 2 and a half years earlier in Warsaw and had divorced his wife in Antwerp where he remarried in a 'Stille chupa' (a Jewish ceremony without civil registration). He now sought to marry his second wife civilly. The case was adjourned until he could bring proof of his alleged Get. There is no further record of such proof having been brought.

Personal status checks

The Beth Din provided certification of origin for many people. For example, on 15th November 1914, a certificate was given to the Aliens Emigration Office establishing that a Mr Orbach was a native of Russia. On 3rd January 1915, witnesses attended the Beth Din to testify that one D. Galinsky was born in Kranopol, this being necessary for him to obtain a certificate to sail to the USA.

Numerous individuals testified as to their origins in Russia so that certificates could be issued for the Russian consulate and on 28th January 1915, a gentleman living in High Street Whitechapel testified that his son in law Solomon Croezer of Antwerp, now in London, had a son (his only son and the main supporter of the family) serving in the Dutch army. A certificate was issued for the Dutch consulate.

German prisoners of war

On 23rd December 1914, Rev. B. Michaelson reported that about 60 Jewish enemy prisoners of war were being held on a ship in Portsmouth Harbour and wanted access to kosher food and Jewish religious services. A letter was dispatched to the minister of the Portsmouth congregation, Rev. Isaac Phillips to make inquiries and "interest himself in the matter."

On 28th December, Rev. Phillips reported to the Beth Din that he had the

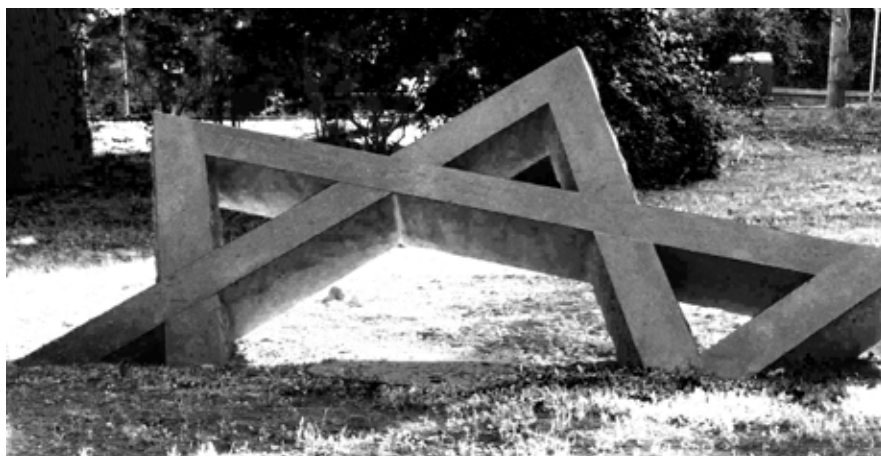
matter in hand and was awaiting a permit from the Provost Marshall, to visit the ship. Unfortunately, the next day he reported that he had been refused permission to visit the ship.

Incidentally, Rev. Phillips served the Portsmouth Community from 1866-1924 and his father in law John Edwards had been a boy sailor under Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805!

Fallen soldiers

Perhaps the most poignant entry in the Proceedings Book of the Beth Din during the first year of the war is a record of a Mr Goldberg of New Castle Street bringing to the Beth Din “official intimation from the War Office” that his brother Parris Goldberg had died in hospital in Germany (sic) as a result of wounds. Parris Goldberg of the Middlesex Regiment had been one of two Jewish soldiers to die on 23rd August 1914 in the Battle of the Mons, the first major engagement between German and British forces in World War One. He is buried in St Symphorien Military Cemetery in Belgium, where on 4th August 2014 the British Government will be staging a commemorative event.

These are but a few of the activities with which the Beth Din was involved with at the initial stages of World War One as its workload changed as the war developed. The Beth Din provided religious services and leadership for the broader Jewish community to try to maintain Jewish communal life in the very trying circumstances of World War One.



JFS and the Great War

Rebecca Filer of South Hampstead Synagogue, who has just finished Year 13 at JFS

In 1914, the 'Great War' broke out, and JFS, then the Jews' Free School of which the United Synagogue is the foundation body, played a considerable part in the war effort. 1,230 JFS boys served in the Allied forces and at least 240 lost their lives. The war they served in was arguably the most influential event for the direction of the 20th Century, leading to the redrawing of Europe, the loss of over nine million lives and ultimately World War Two.

The words of the October 1914 issue of 'The Jews' Free School Magazine' aptly sum up the mood of the early days of the war; immense pride as well as a sense that the alumni of JFS serving in the war were not only Jews, but an integral part of British society. It speaks of a need for "the school to do its little share in the great struggle" demonstrating clearly the idea that in times of "great struggle," no matter what area of society one belongs to, we unite to achieve a common goal.

The role that JFS played during the war was the same as that played by any other school across Britain, and that is what is most remarkable. Those 1,230 JFS students were immigrants, children of immigrants, who felt a deep connection with the country they lived in and did not choose to isolate themselves from the rest of Britain. Instead they fought on, like all members of the British Armed Forces. The notion that as British Jews we must integrate ourselves and be valuable members of society is one that continues to ring true today at JFS.

The November 1915 issue of the JFS magazine speaks of the growing numbers of JFS old boys serving in the army as "evidence enough of the fine spirit and patriotism bred in the school." Yet, despite the clear connection that these soldiers had to Britain, this came hand in hand with a connection to Judaism.

There is no clearer illustration of this on-going sense of Jewish identity than the story of Solomon (Solly) Abrahams who was born in Reading on 12 March 1897 to a Polish immigrant father and English mother. He was the youngest of seven children (six boys and one girl) and attended JFS in its then Bell Lane site in the East End from September 1906 after the family moved from Reading to London. Whilst at the School he was considered very intelligent and was a Champion Chess player.

What makes Solly's story particularly interesting is, not only the experience of serving itself, nor that the connection to JFS continues to this day through his great granddaughters, but that Solly chose to keep a detailed diary of his wartime service in, of all things, an old Jews' Free School exercise book. His diary provides a tremendous insight into the lives of young soldiers serving on the front lines, the uncertainty of the earliest years of the War and the transient nature of the wartime experience.

Interspersed with his recollections of digging trenches and coming under enemy fire, are snippets of Jewish life. On 25/26 September 1917 he recalls a Yom Kippur service at Bapaume in France, led by Rev. Michael Adler and on 10 December 1917 he notes his first experience of seeing a Jewish grave bedecked with a Magen David. The challenges of war were immense and this is just one example of the sacrifice that so many JFS students made to serve their country and represent the proud tradition of service by Jewish British servicemen and women that continues to this day.



Solly Abrahams with fellow soldiers

An overview: the First World War in the context of modern world and Jewish history

Tobias Cohen of Highgate Synagogue

The course of Jewish history is often linked to that of general history and sometimes for the worse. Notoriously the great plague caused a reaction of the general population against the Jews who many blamed for it. A more mixed example is the universal enlightenment which resulted in the Jewish one. The First World War and its aftermath were no exception. In this article, I will briefly overview the impact the First World War made on how the world we live in today has developed, especially from a Jewish perspective.

Technology and strategy

The First World War was an event that not only made a massive impact on the world in general, but also on Jewish communities. It had many repercussions on the path that history took. It also sped up technological change, especially medical discoveries in orthopaedics, neurosurgery and psychiatry. The First World War triggered a series of innovative military advances, such as the invention of the tank, better use of artillery for example, the creeping barrage and developments in the aeroplane.

These changes occurred in no small part due to the unexpected length of the war and the toll that it exacted. Since in this war the defender had such a great advantage, the traditional war of movement strategy developed into a war of attrition. On the ground, this occurred because Germany was unable to quickly defeat France with its powerful 'right hook' at the start of the war, a strategy originally proposed by Von Schlieffen, the then German Chief of General Staff.

In response, the German general Von Moltke weakened the German right wing by moving some of its troops to other areas of the fighting, and so gaps appeared in the line advancing on Paris.

Hoping for their own quick knock-out blow, in the battle of the Marne in September 1914, French and British troops were able to drive a wedge between the German armies, forcing them to retreat. Then the series of flanking attempts by both sides, known as 'the race to the sea,' occurred. This is how the war developed into a war of attrition and the western front was a battleground for four years rather than the maximum of six weeks that Von Schlieffen had proposed in his original plan.



During these four years the front line of the Western Front changed little although Germany did advance far into the Russian Empire in the east. However, Germany became exhausted. By the time the armistice came into effect on 11 November 1918, 17 million lay dead of whom 7 million were civilians.

Political and social effects on Europe and for the Jews

The war, its effects and aftermath brought much change to Europe. The empires of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Russia were broken

up and the empires of Britain and France began their inexorable decline. Socialist command economies – most famously in the Soviet Union - were established as an economic, political and social alternative to the capitalist or mixed economies of the West and became the system of power in many countries, until recent times. After the war, old countries were reinvented and new ones were created by the peace treaties with the purpose of preventing another conflict on that scale occurring again.

Many Jews proved themselves as worthy inhabitants of the country that they were living, through being active participants in the war effort.¹ In Britain and the Empire, for example 5 Jewish soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross. This was also true for the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary as well; in fact Otto Frank, the father of Anne Frank had been given the Iron Cross 1st class for his actions in the First World War. Furthermore, actions of Jewish participants for the war effort brought them much support for Zionist aims from the new British rulers of Palestine; and in November 1917, the then Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur James Balfour, wrote a letter to Lord Rothschild at the time – the famous ‘Balfour Declaration’ -, stating that the British government were ‘in favour’ of securing a Jewish home in Palestine.

However, the war also had immediate and negative impacts on Jewry, primarily because many Jews lived in the areas of Eastern Europe where much of the fighting took place. Primarily there were large numbers of Jewish combatants and civilians who were killed in the fighting. Also the Russian Tsar, Nicholas II, banished 600,000 Jews from living by the front lines as he was suspicious that they were collaborating with the enemy. This caused massive turmoil in those communities and increased Jewish opposition to the Tsar by many of those Jews. When the Tsar was overthrown in 1917 and Russia withdrew from the war, many of them became active in and even leaders of the new Soviet regime, whilst many Jews suffered at the hands of the White Russian forces opposing the Soviets.

Longer-term impacts

As I said earlier, the major world catastrophes often impact on Jewry. So far I have only described the short-term impacts on the world in general and on Jewry. However the later reverberations of the war hit Jewry even harder as a little more than twenty years after the end of the First World War, the biggest, most horrific, and most overwhelming incident of history began to be perpetrated – the Second World War, which broke out in 1939.

¹ The author's great grandfather Isaac Cohen (Yitzchak, after whom the author is named) was a soldier on the western front and was badly wounded in the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917.

This outbreak was the culmination of a series of events that had occurred throughout the interwar period. The main link between the First World War and the Holocaust is that the aftermath of the war caused economic and social upheaval across Europe creating the conditions for extremist leaders to take power which led to the outbreak of the Second World War. Without these circumstances, Hitler could not plausibly have taken power and later have carried out the Holocaust.

Another tragedy of the First World War which helped to create the conditions for the slaughter in the Second World War, was the genocide perpetrated by the Ottomans against the Armenians during the First World War. This genocide is still denied by the descendants of the perpetrators to this day. During and after the First World War a planned and systematic massacre of between one and one and a half million Armenians was carried out by the Ottoman government while the world stood by and watched. This genocide is still widely denied within Turkey to this day. This event was the first indicator of what people are capable of doing to other people in modern times and showed that even an event such as this, could be allowed to happen.

We should end on what ultimately became a more positive note despite many travails on the way. The chain of events starting with the First World War, including the Balfour Declaration, the British mandate, the increased migration of Jews to Palestine in the inter-war period and the tragic events in the 1940s ultimately led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, re-establishing a Jewish Commonwealth in Israel after a gap of 2,000 years.

As we have seen, the world we live in would have looked very different if it had not been for the First World War and we should appreciate our blessed times even more.





**Tisha B'Av:
reflections on the
saddest day in the
Jewish calendar**

On August 4 1914, the day that Great Britain entered World War One, the then British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, famously and presciently reflected that, “the lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our life-time.”¹

That August 4, as it does this year, coincided with Tisha B'Av (9 Av in the Jewish calendar), which from a broad overview of Jewish history is the saddest day in the Jewish calendar. Tisha B'Av is a fast day, second in importance as a fast day only to Yom Kippur.

The Biblical prophet Zechariah, who lived during the early part of the Second Temple Era (c.500 CE), noted in his book (8:19) that four fasts were instituted to make sure that our connection to and affinity with Jerusalem and the Temple would remain within our national consciousness. Tisha B'Av is one of these fasts. It primarily commemorates the destruction of both of the Temples in Jerusalem (586 BCE and 70 CE respectively).

Fasting also provides a tangible expression of the discomfort we must feel when considering these elements of our history, especially outside of Israel, as well as the fact that the Biblical visions of national redemption have not yet come to fruition.

This is one of the main reasons why despite our national wanderings over more than 2,000 years, we have not only remembered our history, but have also been able to galvanise ourselves to return to the Land of Israel leading to the establishment of the State of Israel.

The central texts of Tisha B'Av are the Biblical book of Eichah (Lamentations), a powerful lament written by the Biblical prophet Jeremiah in response to the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and the Kinot (painful Tisha B'Av reflections through the ages) lamenting various tragedies in Jewish history.

Not only do we refrain from eating and drinking (you must of course consult medical and rabbinic advice if you fear any complications due to fasting) on Tisha B'Av, but we also do not wear leather shoes and sit on low chairs, amongst other observances, to help us to feel the sense of loss that this day marks.

Amongst other tragic events which took place on Tisha B'Av or have a significant link to it are:

1 See Sir Edward Grey's memoirs, *Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916*, New York, 1925, p.20.

- a. The corrosive report about the Land of Israel delivered by the spies sent by Moses from the desert, which led the majority of the Children of Israel to question whether they should go to the Land at all. This resulted in the famous 40 years (in total) of wandering in the desert. See Bemidbar (Numbers) chapters 13 and 14 for the whole story;
- b. The destruction of the first and second Temples (586 BCE by the Babylonians and 70 CE by the Romans respectively) and the shocking, mass loss of life and exile which accompanied those calamities;
- c. The ploughing over of Jerusalem by the Roman general, Turnus Rufus, following the suppression of the Jewish rebellion led by Bar Kochba, in c. 135 CE;
- d. The start of the First Crusades in France and Germany in 1095, which savagely destroyed many Jewish communities with enormous loss of life;
- e. The burning of wagon-loads of the Talmud (the major work of Jewish law and ethics) in Paris in 1242;
- f. The expulsion of Jews from England in 1290;
- g. The expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492;
- h. The start of mass transportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp in 1942.

The kinot help us to focus on the enormity and impact of these tragedies. The standard edition in many English-speaking communities is a scholarly work by the late Rabbi Abraham Rosenfeld, who served several communities including Finchley Synagogue. In recent years, the Koren and Artscroll publishing houses have also put out translated kinot with explanations and reflections.

Many communities hold special services and organise programmes to help us to make the most out of Tisha B'Av.

The great Chasdic Rebbe, Rabbi Yekuti'el Yehudah Halberstam (known as the Sanz-Klausenburg Rebbe), was a profound scholar and remarkable leader. He lost his wife, 11 children and many of his students in the Shoah

(Holocaust), yet built a new family and raised new students and institutions, first in America and then in Israel. He famously built the Laniado Hospital in Netanya, Israel, and helped to develop the neighbourhood around it.

It is said that he taught that there were two days of the year when he could not even think of eating. The first is Yom Kippur, when the chance for a fresh start in spiritual terms was so absorbing. The second is Tisha B'Av, a day that is so sad.

We hope and pray, echoing the words of Eichah (1:15) that Tisha B'Av will soon turn from a day mourning to a day of redemption and happiness instead.

Go to our resources page at www.theus.org.uk/100yearsago for a pictorial text and translation of Eichah.



**Prayers
for the
Armed
Services**

תפילת יזכור לחללי המלחמות

MEMORIAL PRAYER FOR THE ARMED SERVICES

אל קלא רחמים, שוכן במרום, חסדא כבודא נבוכא על סגמי
השכינה, במעלות קדושים ונחורים, קושר וצדיק מנחמים,

את נשמות

כל אנשי חתול שחללנו

במלחמות העולם הראשונה והשנייה ובקשר מערכות

שחללנו לעולמים, אלא בעל הרחמים יסמכים בסתר נפשי
לעולמים, ויחד בחדר נתיים את נשמותם, זה הוא נחלתם,
ויהיה בשלום על משכבם, ואמר אמן.

אל קלא רחמים God, full of mercy, who dwells on high, grant fitting
rest on the wings of the Divine Presence, in the heights of the holy
and the pure who shine like the radiance of heaven, to the souls
of our brothers and sisters who risked their lives in defending this
country in two world wars and other conflicts, who have gone to
their eternal home. We beseech You, Master of compassion, shelter
them in the shadow of Your wings forever and bind their souls in
the bond of everlasting life. The LORD is their heritage; may they
rest in peace, and let us say: Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SAFETY OF
THE BRITISH ARMED SERVICES

God on high who dwells in might, the King to whom peace belongs, look down from Your holy habitation and bless the Servicemen and Women of the British Armed Forces who risk their lives for the sake of peace on earth. Be their shelter and stronghold, and let them not falter. Give them the strength and courage to thwart the plans of the enemy and end the rule of evil. May their enemies be scattered and their foes flee before them, and may they rejoice in Your salvation. Bring them back safely to their homes, as it is written: "The LORD will guard you from all harm, He will guard your life. The LORD will guard your going and coming, now and for evermore." And may there be fulfilled for us the verse: "Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more." Let all the inhabitants on earth know that sovereignty is Yours and Your name implies are over all You have created - and let us say: Amen.

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